

## Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 DODE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05

INRE-00 CIAE-00 EUR-08 L-01 SP-02 EB-03 SSO-00 /042 W  
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O P 100947Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5867

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO PRIORITY

USCINCEUR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 2367

LIMDIS

PASS DEPT OF DEFENSE FOR ASST. SECY ELLSWORTH

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, NL

SUBJ: F-104 REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT: MOD VREDELING

SEE MAJOR POLITICAL PROBLEMS REMAINING

1. MOD VREDELING ASKED DCM TO HAVE PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH HIM EVENING OF MAY 9 TO DISCUSS VREDELING'S CONCERNS RE POLITICAL PROBLEMS STILL STANDING IN THE WAY OF GON SELECTION OF THE F-16. VREDELING SAID HE HAD NO DOUBT THAT TECHNICAL AND PRICE INFORMATION WAS FLOWING SATISFACTORILY FROM DUTCH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN FUNCTIONARIES TO THEIR US COUNTERPARTS BUT HE WANTED TO BE SURE THE US FULLY UNDERSTOOD THE POTENTIALLY SERIOUS PROBLEMS HE FACED AS A GOVERNMENT MINISTER AND WHICH COULD ONLY BE SOLVED, IN HIS JUDGEMENT, AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL IN THE US.

2. VREDELING INTRODUCED HIS REMARKS BY STATING THAT  
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WHILE THERE WAS "NO ENTUHUSIASM" IN THE DUTCH

CABINET FOR THE F-16 PURCHASE, HE HAD, THROUGH HARD AND PERSISTENT WORK GOTTEN HIS MINISTERIAL COLLEAGUES TO EXPRESS A CLEAR PREFERENCE FOR THE GD PLANS. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION HE SAID, THAT AMONG HIS LABOR PARTY COLLEAGUES, FINANCE MINISTER DUISENBERG HAD CREATED SOME DIFFICULTIES, DEVELOPMENT AID MINISTER PRONK WAS ACTIVELY OPPOSED AND PRIMIN DEN UYL WANTED TO SLOW DOWN THE WHOLE SELECTION PROCESS UNTIL VREDELING PUT PRESSURE ON HIM TO GO ALONG WITH THE PREFERENCE CONSENSUS. MINISTER OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS LUBBERS HAD SAID FROM THE NARROW POINT OF VIEW OF THE VALUE OF THE OFFSET PACKAGE HE WOULD HAVE TO FAVOR THE MIRAGE BUT HE WAS WILLING TO ACCEPT VREDELING'S RECOMMENDATION, AS THE RESPONSIBLE MINISTER, IN VIEW OF THE OTHER CONSIDERATIONS. TRANSPORTATION MINISTER WESTERTERP REACHED THE SAME CONCLUSION DESPITE HIS INITIAL PREFERENCE FOR THE MIRAGE BECAUSE IT WOULD OSTENSIBLY CONCORD BETTER WITH HIS EUROPEAN UNITY CONCEPTS. THE TWO RADICAL PARTY MINISTERS WERE OPPOSED TO THE F-16 BUT THANKS TO STRONG SUPPORT FOR VREDELING'S POSITION FROM FONMIN VAN DER STOEL, THEY WERE KEPT IN A MINORITY.

3. VREDELING SAID HE NOW HAD A MANDATE FROM THE CABINET TO NEGOTIATE THE LETTER OF INTENT AND MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH US AUTHORITIES AND TO PURSUE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE NETHERLANDS' CONSORTIUM PARTNERS BASED ON THE SELECTION OF THE F-16, SUBJECT TO TWO CRUCIAL CONDITIONS: A) THAT THE FRENCH, VIA THE GISCARD D'ESTAING-TINDEMANS MEETING, NOT COME IN WITH A CONCRETELY AND SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED OFFER (VREDELING'S FIRST REPORT OF THE MEETING DID NOT RPT NOT GIVE HIM GROUNDS FOR CONCERN); AND B) THAT THE 4-NATIONAL CONSORTIUM HANG TOGETHER. IF BELGIUM SHOULD DROP OUT, VREDELING SAID, IT WOULD ADD IMMENSELY TO HIS DIFFICULTIES IN OBTAINING FINAL GON APPROVAL FOR THE F-16. AS LONG AS VAN DEN BOEYNANTS CONTINUED TO RESORT TO EVERY DEVICE TO PROMOTE THE MIRAGE, INCLUDING MISREPRESENTATION OF TECHNICAL AND PRICE INFORMATION, AND AS LONG AS HE COULD NOT BE POLITICALLY SQUELCHED BY TINDEMANS AND VAN ELSLANDE, DESPITE THEIR CONFIDENTIAL

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LEANING TOWARD THE F-16, THERE REMAINED A GOOD CHANCE THAT THE GOB WOULD SELECT THE MIRAGE OR POSTPONE A DECISION INDEFINITELY.

4. HAVING OUTLINED THE GNERAL POLICY FRAMEWORK IN WHICH HE WAS AUTHORIZED TO PROCEED, WHICH, VREDELING INDICATED, LEFT A LOT TO BE DESIRED, HE THEN DISCUSSED THREE TROUBLE POINTS WITH THE US OFFER ON WHICH US

AUTHORITIES HAD SO FAR NOT BEEN ABLE TO GIVE THE GON SATISFACTION. THEY WERE: A) INABILITY OF USG TO COMMIT LEGALLY BEYOND THE FIRST 250-300 AIRCRAFT OUT OF THE TOTAL OF 650 ON WHICH THE WHOLE PROGRAM IS PREDICATED, AND THE INBILITY OF THE US TO TELL THE CONSORTIUM WHAT THE COST CONSEQUENCES WOULD BE IF CONGRESSIONAL ACTION-OR INACTION-FORCED THE USAF TO STOP ITS PROCUREMENT HALFWAY THROUGH THE PROGRAM; B) INABILITY OF US AUTHORITIES TO PROVIDE AN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS RE COST CONSEQUENCES AND WHO WOULD BEAR THEM IN CASE THE US DECIDED ON A DESIGN OR EQUIPMENT MODIFICATION OF THE STANDARD PLANE WHICH ONE OR MORE OF THE CONSORTIUM MEMBERS DID NOT WANT. IN SHORT, WHO WOULD PAY FOR THIS RISK? AND C) RESIDUAL DUTCH DOUBTS ABOUT THE PROTECTION AFFORDED THEM BY THE "REASONABLY COMPETITIVE" CONCEPT IN THE OFFSET PACKAGE.

5. VREDELING EMPHASIZED THE REAL DANGER (TO THE F-16 PURCHASE) IF HE WENT BEFORE THE CABINET IN ITS FINAL DELIBERATIONS SCHEDULED FOR MAY 23 AND HAD NOT RECEIVED ASSURANCES FROM THE US ON THESE THREE POINTS. HE FEARED THE CABINET WOULD STALL FOR FURTHER TIME, OR EVEN REVERSE ITSELF, ESPECIALLY SINCE VAN DEN BOEYNANTS WAS CAPITALIZING ON ALL THESE UNCERTAINTIES, PARTICULARLY A), TO DISCREDIT THE F16 PROGRAM AND PUSH THE MIRAGE.

6. VREDELING WAS UNAWARE THAT VAN DER STOEL WAS SCHEDULED TO SEE SECRETARY SCHLESINGER MAY 15 BUT READILY AGREED WITH THE SUGGESTION THAT VAN DER STOEL DISCUSS THESE POINTS ON VREDELING'S BEHALF. IF THE PROBLEM COULD NOT BE RESOLVED AT THAT MEETING, VREDELING THOUGHT IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE FOR HIM TO SEE

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SECRETARY SCHLESINGER DISCREETLY ON THE EVE OF THE DPC MEETING IN BRUSSELS. THERE WAS ALSO A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF PRIN DEN UYL RAISING THESE POINTS DURING HIS MAY 14 MEETINGS WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY. DEN UYL'S INITIAL ATTITUDE HAD BEEN THAT HE WANTED TO STAY AWAY FROM THE REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT QUESTION BUT VREDELING WOULD SEE IF THERE HAD BEEN A CHANGE.

7. VREDELING CONFIRMED THAT EVEN ASSUMING HE COULD OBTAIN FINAL GON APPROVAL BY THE END OF MAY, HE WOULD FACE GREAT DIFFICULTIES WITH THE LABOR PARTY GROUP DURING THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON THE F-16 SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 5. HE ALSO CONFIRMED THAT HE WOULD DRAW THE CONSEQUENCES, I.E. RESIGN, IF A MAJORITY

OF HIS PARTY GROUP VOTED AGAINST THE F-16.  
HOWEVER, IN RESPONSE TO SOME PROBING HE ALLWED  
THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOME FACE-SAVING FORMULA MIGHT  
BE FOUND. IN THE MEANWHILE HE WAS CONCENTRATING  
(SENSIBLY IN OUR JUDGEMENT) ON GETTING FINAL GON  
APPROVAL SO THAT THE NECESSARY DOCUMENTS COULD BE  
SIGNED.

8. VREDELING JUST TELEPHONED TO SAY THAT HAD  
CHECKED WITH DEN UYL, WHO SAID HE WOLD BE  
INTERESTED IN TALKING ABOUT THE F-16 QUESTION WHEN HE  
IS IN WASHINGTON NEXT WEEK. DCM SAID THIS WOULD WOULD  
BE PASSED ALONG PROMPTLY. VREDELING ADDED THAT HE  
WOULD BE MEETING WITH THE OTHER 3 MOD'S ON MAY 15 (OR WITH  
JUST THE TWO IF VAN DEN BOEYNANTS PLAYED TRUANT) WHEN  
THEY WOULD PROBABLY DECIDE ON THE BASIS OF THE EXISTING  
SITUATION WHETHER TO REQUEST A PRIVATE MEETING WITH  
SECRETARY SCHLESINGER AT OR JUST BEFORE THE DPC.  
GOULD

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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